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A report of the 2-year experiment on the use of new teaching procedures in French language instruction conducted at Antioch College 1958–60. The principal purpose of the study was to determine whether the college could improve the quality of its program of language instruction through the use of new instructional methods and at the same time achieve new economies in the use of its language teaching personnel.

Under the experimental program, a major portion of the classroom time previously conducted by the instructor was handled by two student laboratory assistants. These assistants, working with previously prepared lesson units on acetate visuals or transparencies, accompanied by tape-recorded sound, covered much of the basic instructional materials for French I and reduced the regular class meetings with the instructor to only two 1½-hour lecture meetings per week.

The design of the study called for control and experimental groups to be taught by the conventional and experimental methods, with each group covering the same course materials and meeting the same course objectives. Both groups were matched on a number of variables, and a series of pre- and posttests was administered in order to determine whether there were differences in the achievement levels of the control and experimental groups.

Data from both years of the study on a wide variety of measures revealed that students learned as well by the experimental method of instruction as they did by the conventional procedures. In those cases where significant differences did exist, the differences favored the members of the experimental groups. The findings also revealed that major economies were effected in the use of instructional time.

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ANTIOCH COLLEGE REPORTS

Published by the Office of Educational Research, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio (October, 1960)

1 Experiment in French Language Instruction

This is a report of a two-year experiment at Antioch College on the use of new teaching procedures in French Language instruction. The experiment was conducted under a grant from the Fund for the Advancement of Education during the period 1958 to 1960. The principal purpose of the study was to see if the College, through the use of new instructional methods, could improve the quality of its program of language instruction while at the same time achieve new economies in the use of its language teaching personnel.[1] *This report is the first in a series of digests to be published on new program developments and research studies under way at Antioch College. Full study reports are available from the Office of Educational Research, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.*

Background

Since 1951, language enrollments at Antioch College have more than quadrupled. A study of language enrollments through the period of 1951-1958 shows an increase in the number of students taking French from 48 in 1951-52 to 210 in 1958-59, and an increase in total language enrollments from 117 in 1951-52 to 548 in 1958-59. Added to this picture has been the increasing pressure the College has felt for language instruction as a result of its new program of Antioch Education Abroad. This program, now in its third year of operation, is designed to enable Antioch students to spend a full year abroad in study, work, and residence at no greater cost than a regular year at Antioch. Approximately 120 students participated in this program last year, about 150 are expected to take part in the program in the present school year, and it is anticipated that as many as 200 students will regularly participate once it has become fully established.

With these factors in mind, Professor Herman Schnurer, Chairman of the Department of Foreign Languages and Professor of French, sought to develop ways by which greater economies could be achieved in the program of language instruction without impairing its educational quality. Aside from this element of numbers and costs, Mr. Schnurer had long felt that too much of the teacher's time in a beginning language course was taken up with subject matter that could be handled in other ways; that much of this material was divisible, and that many elements in it (counting, the days of the week, conjugating, certain elements of pronunciation, and so forth) could be handled just as well by trained laboratory assistants working from previously prepared audiovisual and workbook materials. Furthermore, Mr. Schnurer felt that as new structures were spelled out with the aid of these audiovisual and workbook materials, the student would actually be more fully immersed in the subject matter than before. The hope was that these newer procedures would not only make for better use of instructional time and free the instructor for more independent work and research of his own, but also that they would enable him to center more of his classroom time on general lecture and discussion materials. While the study has been primarily directed toward the development and evaluation of these new methods of instruction for French I, some attempt has also been made to apply these methods to second and third levels of French.

Description of the Experimental Teaching Procedures

Development of the Acetate Lesson Units

The new program in language instruction reorganizes the teaching procedures so that a major portion of the classroom time previously conducted by the instructor is now handled by two student laboratory assistants. These assistants work from a series of previously prepared lesson units which have been drawn directly on acetate visuals or transparencies and which have been mounted for use with an overhead projector. These acetate lesson units are accompanied by tape-recorded sound and are designed to cover the basic instruction materials for French I. The acetate medium has been selected for several reasons: because of its economy, with each visual costing about 10¢ per sheet and requiring no chemical processing as does the photographic or diazo film usually used with an overhead projector; because it easily lends itself to alteration by simply erasing the materials on the film; and because the visuals (as is the case

[1]The new teaching procedures described in this report have been developed by Herman Schnurer, Chairman of the Department of Foreign Languages and Professor of French. The study has been under the direction of Samuel Baskin, Director of Educational Research, and Robert Boyd, Assistant Professor of Education. Edward Clark, Audiovisual Librarian, and Mrs. Corinne Barger, Audiovisual Assistant, served as consultants to the study group.

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with other materials used with the overhead projector) can be shown in varying degrees of light.

Organization of Class Time

The new plan changes the method of teaching French from one that made use of separate sections of about twenty students each (with each section meeting six times a week with the instructor over a period of twelve weeks) to one that eliminates sectioning and wherein students meet twice a week as a full group with the instructor over a period of twelve weeks, and four times a week (also a full group) with the student laboratory assistants (with each meeting with the instructor and each laboratory session running about 1½ hours). Instructional time saved under the new method approximates twelve hours per week at each level of French (French I, II, III).

The hour-and-a-half laboratory meeting was organized in such a way that it was broken into three units of approximately thirty minutes each. One-third of the laboratory time was devoted to a presentation of the acetate lesson materials, one-third to individual work in standard language laboratory booths set up for this purpose, and one-third of the laboratory time was devoted to drill and practice exercises in face-to-face contact with the student assistants. The regular class meetings with the instructor (two 1½-hour meetings per week) were devoted to a review and clearing up of questions relating to the laboratory materials, briefing and preparation for the next laboratory meeting, and lectures and discussions on French civilization.

Hypotheses

Two principal hypotheses were presented:

1. That students participating in an experimental course in French I, which made use of certain audiovisual and workbook materials and was taught in large part by specially trained student assistants, would demonstrate a degree of learning and achievement as great as that of a comparable group of students participating in the regular course in French I, but not using the audiovisual and workbook materials and taught in its entirety by the course instructor.

2. That students participating in such an experimental course would demonstrate a degree of satisfaction with the course and the instructor as great as that of a comparable group of students taking the regular course in French I.

Design of the Study

The design of the study called for the employment of control and experimental groups to be taught by the conventional and the experimental methods, with each group held responsible for covering the same course materials and meeting the same course objectives. Both groups were matched on a number of variables, and a series of pre- and post-tests was administered in order to determine whether there were differences in the achievement levels of the control and experimental groups. In addition, a teacher rating scale was employed in an attempt to check on student satisfactions and dissatisfactions with both the regular and experimental teaching procedures.

The Instruments of the Study: Pre- and Post-Test Measures

Pre-tests employed to check on the comparability of the groups included the Verbal Skills Examination of the College Entrance Examination Board and a Vocabulary Test of English Skills as measures of scholastic ability, the Yale II Artificial Language Test as a measure of language aptitude, and the Antioch Language Placement Test as a measure of French language background at the time of taking the course.

Post-test measures included the College Entrance Examination Board Achievement Test in French Reading as a measure of the individual's vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension skills; the Co-operative French Listening Comprehension Test as a measure of audio-comprehension; the readministration of the Antioch Language Placement Test as a measure of both gain and post-course achievement; and several instruments specially devised by the instructor and the study staff to measure dictation skills and reading and speaking ability. With the exception of the tests of dictation skills and reading and speaking ability, all measures employed were standardized instruments.

In addition to these measures of achievement, it was reasoned that the attitudes of the students toward the teacher and the course should be examined in that such attitudes might well affect the learning process. Toward this end student judgments of the instructor and the course were obtained through the use of a teacher rating scale.

The Comparability of the Groups

Members of the control and experimental groups were analyzed as to their comparability by total groups (all members of the control group compared with all members of the experimental group), by subdivisions according to year in college, male/female distribution, and background experience in French language; and as to proportion of male and female students, freshman and upperclass students, and students with some or no experience in French in each group. No significant differences were found between the groups (by total groups or by subdivisions of the groups) on each of the measures of comparability employed.

Results

The Achievements of the Groups

Data with regard to the achievements of the groups were analyzed so as to provide information with regard to (a) the achievements of the *total* groups on each of the measures employed in the study; (b) the achievements of

the groups by *subdivisions* of year level, male/female distribution, and extent of background experience in French at the time of taking the course; and (c) the achievements of the groups in terms of "gain scores" as measured through a pre- and post-test administration of the Antioch Language Placement test. In all instances comparisons were made for the control group of 1958-59, the experimental group of 1958-59 (experimental I), and the experimental group of 1959-60 (experimental II).

The analysis of the data by these groupings reveals the following findings:

1. On seven of eight major comparisons made between total groups (experimental vs. control), no significant differences were found between the groups. In the one instance, on a Test of Reading Ability, where a significant difference was found, this difference favored the experimental groups. In each year's study, mean scores of the experimental group exceeded those of the control group.

2. Of a variety of comparisons made between subdivisions of the experimental and control groups (freshman control vs. experimental; upperclass control vs. experimental, etc.), three comparisons proved to be significant in favor of the experimental groups. All three significant differences occurred on the tape-recorded tests of reading ability. In all other sub-group comparisons no significant differences were found between the members of the control and experimental groups.

3. No significant differences were found between the groups when the data were analyzed by "gain scores" within each group.

Student Attitudes Toward the Teaching Procedures Employed

While the differences in the students' *over-all* rating of the instructor did not prove to be significant, there were some indications that the members of the experimental groups tended to respond more favorably toward the instructional procedures employed than did the members of the control group. This was evidenced by the fact that in the analysis of individual items in the Teacher Rating Scale the experimental course was rated more favorably on nine of twelve comparisons made. In two instances the analysis of the individual items on the Instructor Rating Scale indicated significant differences in favor of the experimental group; in one instance, a significant difference was found in favor of the control group.

Summary of Findings

The major study findings were as follows:

1. Data from both years of the study on a wide variety of measures indicated that students learned as well by the experimental method of instruction as they did by the conventional procedures. In those cases where significant differences did exist, these differences favored the members of the experimental groups.

2. The new methods of instruction were received with considerable enthusiasm by the students. While there were few significant differences in the teacher-rating scale, an analysis of individual items on this scale revealed that the members of the experimental groups rated the course and the instructor more favorably than did the members of the control group on nine of twelve items on this scale.

3. The new study procedures offered major economies in the use of instructional time. Assuming an enrollment of sixty students in French I, French II, and French III, savings of instructional time are approximated at twelve hours per week for each level of French.[1]

Implications

For a first try, the results of the study offer encouragement both as to learnings that may be achieved and some very real economies that may be realized through the employment of these newer methods of language instruction. Certainly they point to learnings at least equal, and in some instances superior, to those of the conventional teaching process. What is more, they offer evidence that students find this newer method of teaching at least as satisfying a way of learning as they did the conventional method. Should the newer methods continue to prove successful, the College hopes to adapt them to other levels and areas of language instruction and to make the materials available to other institutions.

One closing note needs to be added here as to the motivation behind this research and the College's view in encouraging research of this kind. Its rationale lies in several bases: in the pressure the College has been feeling to make more effective use of its instructional staff and facilities; in the College's desire to discover new ways to add to the quality of the students' learning experience; in its belief in the students and their readiness to accept a far greater share

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[1]These savings are in the time spent by the regular course instructor in the conduct of the class. While achieving these savings in regular staff instructional time, the new method of instruction, through its use of the student assistants in the conduct of class laboratory sessions, allows for considerably more supervised instructional time than was heretofore the case. Supervised instructional time under the former and new methods of instruction is as follows:

Former Method of Instruction	*New Method of Instruction*
French I—3 separate sections of 20 students each met six times a week with the instructor.	French I—1 section of 60 students meets twice a week with the instructor (3 hours) and four times a week with the student laboratory assistants in laboratory sessions, running 1½ hours each.
Total supervised instructional time=6 hours per student per week.	Total supervised instructional time=11 hours per student per week (3 hours with regular instructor; 8 hours with lab assistants; plus afternoon practice time as needed).

of the responsibility for their own learning than we have heretofore given them; in its desire to reduce the "detail burden" of the instructor and to open up avenues for independent work and his own development as a teacher; and in its desire to stress a point of view in teaching and learning that presses for some occasional, if not frequent, "shaking up" of the teaching process and some examination and evaluation of what we are achieving in the classroom.

Certainly much of the impetus for this and similar research has come from the present emphasis on the more effective utilization of our teaching resources. It would be a mistake, however, to orient oneself solely to this objective or to view this objective as the principal purpose of such research, for its meaning is far deeper. Of crucial importance in all of this experimentation is the question of the students' educational experience and the ways by which learning really takes place. No study can afford to give second place consideration to this element in its search for new economies; nor does it follow that these economies will necessarily be harmful to the learning process. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that far from being mutually contradictory goals, which pose opposite pulls for the teacher and the administration, these objectives in some instances may well go hand in hand.